

# DRAMA

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An Educational Magazine for Directors, Teachers, and Students of Dramatic Arts

Vol. XXXI, No. 5

FEBRUARY, 1960

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Charles Lane, Peter Lawford, Marcia Henderson, in a scene from the "Dear Phoebe" television series.

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Impetus for the hilarious, madcap complications that ensue is provided by a letter that arrives for Aunt Phoebe from Rochelle Mignon, a "French chantoosey" with a Bronx accent. Rochelle has evidence implicating night club owner Big Joe Moroni in a sports-fix scandal, and Bill, with Mickey's help, goes after the story. To do so, he has to dress up as "Aunt Phoebe" — and then things really start popping. Almost under the noses of Bill and Mickey, Rochelle is murdered, and they have to solve her killing before the next morning's deadline. Of course, virtue — and true love — triumph in the end, but not before the audience has been regaled by a number of the most side-splitting scenes that ever rocked a theatre with laughter.

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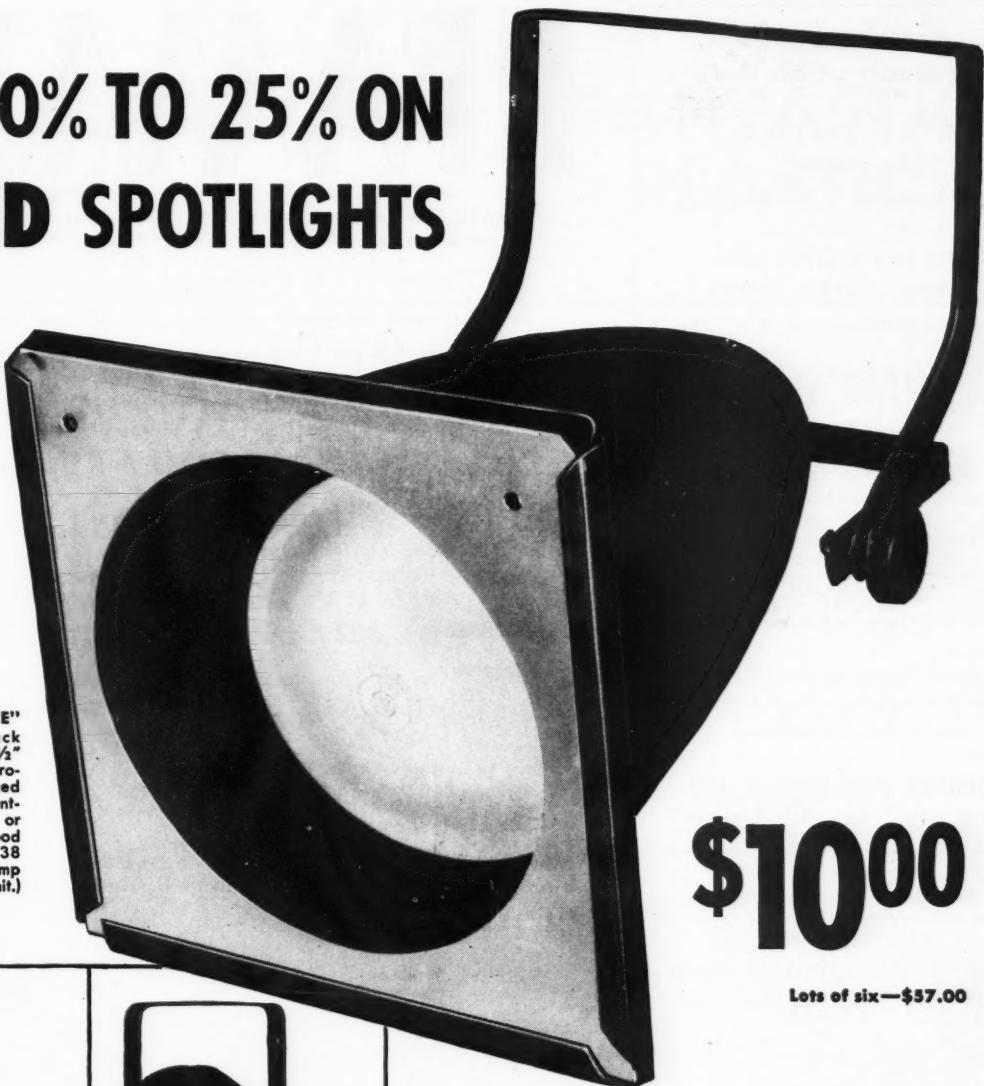
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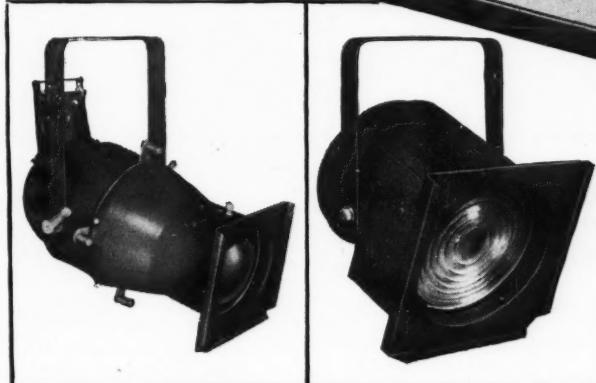
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## CONTENTS

### ARTICLES

PAGE

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Anita Bryant by Doris Niles .....               | 13 |
| Playmakers, Unlimited by Marjorie Day May ..... | 14 |

### FEATURES

|  |    |
|--|----|
| The Authors .....                        | 10 |
| Back Stage .....                         | 12 |
| Thespians in Action (Pictorial) .....    | 18 |
| Thespian Chatter .....                   | 26 |
| 1960 — Regional Conferences — 1960 ..... | 26 |

### SERIES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Director Makes the Movie by B. M. Hobgood .....               | 15 |
| Shreveport Little Theater by Charles R. Trumbo and Pollyann ..... | 20 |

### DEPARTMENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| The Sound of Music by Charles L. Jones .....      | 21 |
| Theater for Children, Edited by Frieda Reed ..... | 22 |
| Plays of the Month, Edited by Earl Blank .....    | 24 |
| Brief Views by Willard Friederich .....           | 32 |

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DRAMATICS is published monthly (eight times) during the school year at 1610 Marlowe St., Cincinnati 24, Ohio, by the National Thespian Society, College Hill Station, Cincinnati 24, Ohio. Dates of publication: Oct. 1, Nov. 1, Dec. 1, Jan. 1, Feb. 1, Mar. 1, April 1, and May 1. Doris M. Marshall, National Director; Maizie G. Weil, Assistant National Director; Leon C. Miller, Secretary and Treasurer; Blandford Jennings, Senior Councilor; Doris Lillehei, Senior Councilor.

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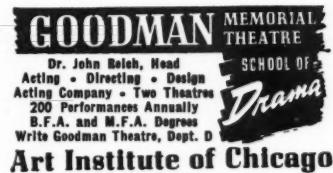
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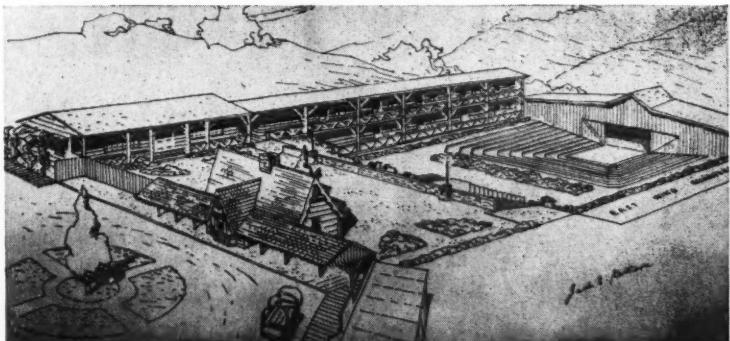
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179 NORTH MICHIGAN AVENUE . . . CHICAGO 1, ILLINOIS

## FOR PLAY CONTESTS

We list here a few of the many good plays we are offering in our 1960 catalog.

**BISHOP'S CANDLESTICKS.** (Founded on an incident in "Les Misérables.") Pauline Phelps. 3 m. 2 f. Int. 25 min. 60c

**THE BOOK.** Beatrice LaForce. 3 f. Int. 30 min. Rated "a superior play" at State Play Festival at Iowa University, 1956. Romantic drama. In her youth, Aunt Laura had received a book of poems from her lover when she was expecting a proposal. She put the book away, unopened. Years after, she opened the book and found the proposal inside. 60c

**DEAR LADY, BE BRAVE.** Comedy by Loyd L. Shelton. 3 m. 3 f. 25 min. Dr. Clark, a young physician, devises a plan to help his friend, Tandy, decide which of three girls to marry. Parts all good. Fungus, the colored janitor, furnishes a large share of the laughs. 60c

**HER GIRLISH HEART.** Luella E. McMahon. Melodrama. 4 m. 1 f. 20 min. Fun for cast and audience. The English servant and Betty's lover foil the villain. The action, including a thinking circle—semi-Conga effect—adds to the comedy. 60c

**HERBIE'S FIRST DATE** and other "Herbie" plays are all good contest plays with teen age characters. Each title, 60c

**LITTLE OSCAR.** A. Van Antwerp. Comedy. 2 m. 2 f. and two baby buggies. Int. 25 min. Henry and Josie are ready to take the baby and go for a picnic when another young couple arrive with their baby. The way Henry gets rid of them will bring roars of laughter from the audience. 60c

**THE LOST WORD.** Drama. Henry Van Dyke's impressive story dramatized by Pauline Phelps. 4 m. 1 f. and a boy, (may be taken by a girl) and a reader. 30 min. Scenery not required, as the reader gives the settings. The play depicts the unhappiness and sorrow that the loss of the name of God meant to Hermas and his beautiful young wife and the joy that comes when the memory of the WORD is restored to Hermas. 60c

**\*MADAME BUTTERFLY.** Pauline Phelps has taken the beautiful and tragic story by John Luther Long and made it into a living, vibrant play. 3 m. 3 f. and a reader. 25 min. 6 copies required. 60c

**MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY.** Pauline Phelps. An adaptation from Edward Everett Hale's story of the same name. 5 m. 2 f. or by easy doubling, 3 m. 1 f. Int. 30 min. 60c

**\*NOTHING TO DESTROY.** Cora Montgomery. Drama. 5 f. 20 min. The scene is a communist den where five women are hiding in a dismal room below the sidewalk. They are gloating over their success in blowing up a chemical plant with the resultant death of many people. Then one of them sees through the little window above her, the national flag. A great, patriotic drama in which the girl gives her life for the flag. 5 Copies required. 60c

**THE RIVALS.** A modernized one act adaptation of Sheridan's play. 5 m. 3 f. extras if desired. 25 min. Luella McMahon adapted this play for the Minnesota State High School Contest where it won top rating. It is a swiftly moving play with comedy characters (or extras) as scene shifters. This is done to music and can be great fun by adding a lively dance routine. The play concerns the love affair of Lydia and Captain Jack. Mrs. Malaprop, with her mis-applied words, furnishes plenty of comedy which is augmented by Sir Anthony and Sir Lucius and others in the cast. 60c

**TELL TALE HEART.** Phelps. 4 m. 30 min. A dramatization of Poe's story. A young student, suffering from dementia, has murdered his uncle and hidden his body under the floor. A sergeant of the police and two other policemen are the supporting cast. 60c

\*For repeat performances on plays starred, a fee of \$2.50 is required. Other plays listed here are non-royalty.

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**A**NITA Bryant of Thespian Troupe 1167, Will Rogers High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, is our Thespian of the Month. Doris Niles, Sponsor, in her article states that Anita, dedicated to her talent, will become one of our future stars in theater and television. With past appearances on the Arthur Godfrey show, the George Gobel show, the Don McNeill Breakfast Club, the Jack Paar show, and the Dick Clark show, Anita, runner-up in the Miss America pageant, is well on her way to new theatrical heights.

**M**ARJORIE Day May, formerly sponsor of Troupe 1443, Pen Argyl, Pa., High School, authors an inspiring article, *Playmakers, Unlimited*, in which appears a challenge to let your own students write their own plays and then present them in public. She states: "One of the trends today in the arts is to encourage creativity." How much really good creative writing is done in your school? Writing short plays for actual public production becomes not only an assignment, but also a challenge.

**S**HREVEPORT Little Theater is this month's article about our nationally known community theaters. I earnestly request all of our Thespian sponsors and students not only merely to read this article, but to study it thoroughly. Here is one of the most successful community theaters in the country. As one studies the procedures and work schedules set up for both cast and crews by John Wray Young and Mrs. Young, who is technical director, one will learn the value of future planning for all productions. This article is a superb piece of reporting by the authors, Charles R. Trumbo and Pollyann, his charming wife.

**A**PUPPET Hansel and Gretel theater is the theme of our Theater for Children. Mrs. Nita Huckabee, Sponsor of Troupe 1259, Temple, Texas, relates its preparation and presentation at her school last year. It must have been delightful with the orchestra accompaniment.

**I**N HIS series, Introduction to Entertainment, B. M. Hobgood stresses the part of the director in making commercial movies. As most of us see only the glamorous heroine or the handsome hero in our night out at the movies, the article, *The Director Makes the Movie*, is most informative. After you have read it, you will conclude, as we do, that the director is the "star," for upon him falls the responsibility for the success of each picture.

**T**HE Sound of Music is Mr. Jones' Best of Broadway this month—and his choice is excellent. Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, Mary Martin, The Trapp Family Singers story—what ingredients for another successful musical comedy! Don't try to get tickets, for this show is sold out months in advance.

**F**OUR excellent plays are included in Dr. Blank's Plays of the Month for your consideration: *Beggar on Horseback*, *Solid Gold Cadillac*, *The Grass Harp*, and *The Torch-Bearers*.

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By AGATHA CHRISTIE

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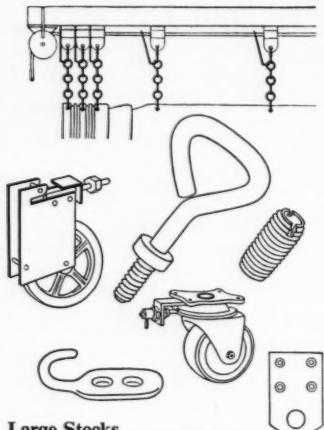
for everyone. Into their midst comes a policeman, traveling on skis. He no sooner arrives, than the jurist is killed. Two down, and one to go. To get to the rationale of the murderer's pattern, the policeman probes the background of everyone present, and rattles a lot of skeletons. But in another famous Agatha Christie switch finish, it is the policeman—or, rather, the man disguised as a policeman—who shoulders the blame. Chalk up another superb intrigue for the foremost mystery writer of her half century.



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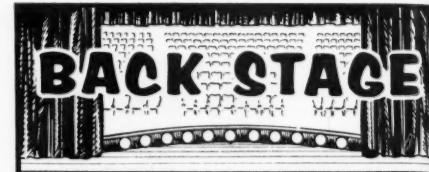
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**NEA HEAD ASKS PRIME EVENING TIME FOR PUBLIC SERVICE TV BROADCASTS**

**T**HE National Education Association urged recently to require that a fair portion of the prime evening television viewing period be devoted to public service broadcasts, including those with educational values.

NEA President Walter W. Eshelman, supervising principal of schools at Upper Dublin, Fort Washington, Pa., told the commission that public service broadcasts in the 7 to 10 p.m. period might be regarded as fair compensation by the stations for the use of the air waves which belong to all the people. Broadcasting stations are license to use these air waves "in the public interest, convenience and necessity."

Speaking of the impact of television on education, Dr. Eshelman pointed out that it has greatly influenced the generation of children now in the public schools.

"No longer," he said, "does the teacher control, to the extent he did only a few years ago, the limits of learning. The 21-inch tube has defined, to a considerable extent, what the student regards as worth knowing and talking about. The increase in things learned outside the classroom and the new learning experience perpetually available on television require of the teacher better preparation and more flexibility. Today's fourth grader can ask penetrating questions about the propulsion of missiles, the functioning of a vaccine, and the principles of architecture."

Dr. Eshelman also urged the Commission to give priority to the claims of education television in all communities where there is already adequate commercial service by two or more commercial stations. Educational stations, he said, have an increasingly important role to play in the education of growing numbers of children and adults.

**A STEP FORWARD**

**T**HE Minnesota Association of Teachers of Speech announced recently in its newsletter, *The Curtain Line*, that the State Board of Education approved the certification of persons to teach speech, as follows:

**"Requirement to teach Speech. In order to teach speech a teacher shall hold a certificate endorsed for the teaching of speech. Such an endorsement is to be based on a minor or major in speech as determined by the college."**

This is indeed a forward step. It has always been my contention that only college trained Speech teachers are qualified to teach speech subjects. To say that all English teachers are qualified speech teachers is ridiculous. Minnesota has blazed the trail; it is for us now to travel the same path.

Likewise, not all teachers are qualified to select, rehearse, stage, and present plays before paid audiences. A teacher of drama should also be required to hold a certificate endorsed for the teaching of the dramatic arts. Granted that a number of Speech teachers are certified to teach drama, I again contend that not all speech teachers are good drama directors. I thus urge all drama teachers everywhere through their local and national educational organizations to fight for state certification. When we reach this Utopia, then and only then can we expect to see national standards in high school theater reach new heights.

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Thespian Anita Bryant

**A** FEW minutes ago I was sitting at my desk working, when suddenly there penetrated my consciousness the familiar voice of Anita Bryant. It was coming from the television in the next room as she made her first regular appearance on the George Gobel show.

"A prophet is not without honor ----," I thought as I returned to my desk after the interruption. Then I pulled out the paper to begin writing this article about our "Thespian of the Month." Could I begin with such a bromidic and uncomplimentary statement, "A prophet is not without honor ----"? Yes, because in Anita's case this isn't true.

Anita was graduated from Will Rogers High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, in May of 1958. In September of the same year she came back to sing on our first assembly. Her mother served as her chaperon, for the rule is that Miss Oklahoma must always have an official chaperon when she makes a public appearance, even when it is at the school from which she has just been graduated. She needed not only a chaperon, but a body guard to protect her from the enthusiasm of the students who wanted to exchange greetings with her and who wanted her autograph. The stage hands presented a ludicrous picture as they lined up with their backs to her requesting that she autograph their shirts.

What is there about Anita that made the student body accept her as a celebrity when at the same time she was just a fellow student? The answer is in the question. Anita kept her amateur standing and never asked for any special privileges in spite of the many professional demands that were made upon her throughout her high school career. This was not something she imposed upon herself from the outside as a political maneuver; it was basic to her make up. She was dedicated to her talent, and there was no distinction to her between professional and amateur.

My experience with many high school students has taught me that if they do much performing for outside groups, they are not very dependable in high school theater. This generalization was never true of Anita. She met the too many demands that were made upon her with unselfish good humor. She never asked to be released from any rehearsal when a group was involved. There was none of the prima donna in her; she was always a good trouper.

Although during her senior year Anita made four series of appearances on Arthur Godfrey's show, she faithfully arranged ahead of time to make up her work. She refused an invitation to go to New York for a network appearance during the time our annual talent show had its week's run, even though we followed our rule and did not give her any more prominence on the show than any other student. She graciously acquiesced when we made a selection for her that fit the theme of the show rather than one that was the best vehicle for her voice and personality.

"Phenomenal success" is the term one might use to describe what Anita has achieved by the second fall season since she has been out of high school. I tried soon after she was graduated to write her up as the "Thespian of the Month," but she was traveling too fast, both literally and figuratively, for me to keep my writing up to date. She began traveling that first summer by going to Atlantic City, where she was

## THESPIAN of the MONTH

# ANITA BRYANT

By DORIS NILES

selected second runner-up in the Miss America pageant. She then went to Chicago to be a regular performer on Don McNeill's Breakfast Club. She made a guest appearance on George Gobel's show. She was again on Arthur Godfrey's show on "New York Confidential," three times on Jack Paar's show, and on Dick Clark's show. This last appearance was on the occasion when one of four records she made last year, "Till There Was You," ranked sixth in the nation according to the Dick Clark rating.

As an indication of how much attention she was attracting, when she had a casual date, this was mentioned in syndicated gossip columns. She was singled out by Life for her part in the Miss America pageant, and she was featured in TV Guide and Radio and TV Mirror.

Is Anita's voice the explanation for her success? Aren't pop singers even with good natural voices rather common in this age? Anita's is an untrained voice in the usual sense, but she has worked with singleness of purpose since she was a little girl toward a career in singing, not in the starry-eyed, wishful-thinking manner, but in a practical, this-is-what-I'm-supposed-to-do — therefore-I'm-doing-it manner.

I recall Anita as a sophomore when she first enrolled in my speech arts class. She had the usual amount of Oklahoma dialect in her speech, which focused my attention. It wasn't until the end of her sophomore year that I discovered for myself Anita's potential, and I was confident she could succeed in the highly competitive world of the theater. It was then that our vocal music director cast her as Nellie Forbush in *South Pacific*, and asked me to be the drama director.

As I read the coffee stained, mimeographed script that had been used by the Broadway director (the only one available at the time), I thought the task would be impossible. How could a happy-go-lucky appearing sophomore, with slender body that had not yet grown up to her hands and feet, play the part with physical skill and dramatic understanding? She had never had a dancing lesson, and how would she know how to project the emotions described in the scant stage directions? I tried to plan what to tell her to do, but I didn't need to tell her. All I needed was to control the degree of intensity and the pacing. She immediately found the "psychological gesture" of her character. This innate dramatic consciousness (or is it imagination?) is, in my opinion, the secret of her ability to "put a song over."

From the time I worked with her on *South Pacific* until the end of her senior year, when she took a course from me the second time for no credit because she realized she needed it, I had no doubt that Anita would move forward rapidly in the professional theater. She is, and must have always been, completely uninhibited. I have never seen her make a self-conscious movement. To her, everyone working on a show is equally important, and she will never have a stumbling block created for her by her fellow workers. Everyone likes to work with her because she is sincerely thoughtful of others, modest, and cooperative. People therefore are eager to help her, and who can resist her roguish sense of humor?

This sense of humor is one trait of Anita's that her producers and directors seem not to have discovered; yet it is one which I believe will be the key to a long tenure for her in the professional theater. She is essentially a comedienne. She has the unself-consciousness, the spontaneity, the sense of timing that comedy requires. If she is given the right vehicle in musical comedy, her position will be assured. With apologies to Mary Martin and Mitzi Gaynor, Anita Bryant created a better Nellie Forbush than they — and I wouldn't be prejudiced!

Only at one time during her high school days did I fear that Anita would change her plans for a career. Always willing to serve with her talent, she began singing in a church she was attending, and she was led to believe she wanted to devote her life to church music. Now that is certainly a worthy ambition, but she doesn't have that kind of voice. I'm sure God didn't intend for Anita Bryant to be a church choir or an evangelistic soloist. Instead, by the life she lives and the pleasure she gives, she can best serve in the path she is now making.

# Playmakers, Unlimited

By MARJORIE DAY MAY

**D**O YOUR students write their own one-act plays? It's fun. We tried three different approaches to play-making last year.

In an English class where we were scheduled to do some creative writing anyway, we decided to do one assignment all in dialogue. (This is known as the sneaky approach.) Beginnings are always difficult, but we adopted the *in medias res* principle of short story writing. We put two people who were differing about something on stage and let them start arguing. This also helped to solve the problems of unity of time and place which frequently cause trouble in one-act play construction. With two people in conflict, something *has* to happen soon.

We tried to eliminate the problem of too many underdeveloped characters by saying we'd not have more than three or four characters in a play. But this ruling really caused us trouble. Perhaps the fact that each student seemed to need many characters in his play is a reflection of how we live today. In the social world of each individual so many people play a part that we can't isolate any one of our problems and analyze it to see just how two or three people influence the final outcome.

What kind of problems was treated in the plays? Following the old rule of creative writing that we can write best about what we ourselves have experienced, we wrote about brother-sister conflicts, parent-child struggles, teacher-student differences, girl friend-boy friend troubles. A few students tried the murder-mystery type of play—not too successfully.

Of what benefit is this kind of writing to the student? In some cases it can provide a psychological catharsis. When the student tries to see both sides of the conflict, he comes to appreciate his father's or sister's reasons for certain actions or decisions.

What did we do with the plays? Some we cast and produced. Others we typed and added to a bound volume of superior creative writing done during the year. This volume will be placed in our school library where future classes will be able to read the great works of last year's Shakespeares.

What intrinsic value has there been in this activity? We hope we've caught the spirit of last year's teen-age world in our small town. We like to think that if someone reads these plays a century hence, he will say, "Isn't it interesting

that in 1959 while Christian Herter and the other foreign ministers were trying to prevent a nuclear war, children were growing up happily in Hometown, U.S.A., with only small troubles (which looked large to them of course) such as getting a date for the spring prom?"

Our second approach to play writing grew out of the first. We cast one of the written plays and began to rehearse. Having heard that Shakespeare as prompter often threw lines that weren't in the script to the actors, the director began to ad lib lines that seemed more apt for the girls and boys who were playing the parts. Soon they were ad libbing at each rehearsal. Finally we decided that the characters would seem more natural if we just chose a list of six or seven things that the two babysitters would talk about as they worried about the strange man walking up and down in front of the house and then let them converse about them. Each rehearsal differed from the last; the conversation became realistic teen-age jargon; and the suspense mounted. It kept the girls on the *qui vive*, because neither one knew what the other one might say next. When the strange man turned out to be a handsome young college student who couldn't get up his nerve to borrow a book from the professor-owner of the house, a happy ending was a natural.

Some members of the Junior Drama Club, returning from a radio script broadcast, provided the third approach to original playwriting for us. They knew the exalted Thespians were doing a Children's Theater production and that the Juniors were writing original plays. So one of the Junior Drama Club girls took a nursery rhyme and started telling an original story about it. In the middle of the story she stopped, and another student continued. This was so much fun

(Continued on Page 31)



**The Eavesdroppers**, student-written play, Troupe 1443, Pen Argyl, Pa., High School, Marjorie May, Sponsor, 1958-59



**Heidi Bo Peep**, student-written play, Troupe 1443, Pen Argyl, Pa., High School, Marjorie May, Sponsor, 1958-59

# The Director Makes the Movie

By B. M. HOBGOOD

**C**OMFORTABLY curved into cushioned seats the movie audience witnesses a miracle. A huge translucent screen leaps into radiance with projected shadows that form story-telling pictures in motion. The vibrant life of those gigantic images makes ordinary existence seem comparatively dull.

Most of the audience doesn't know how the illusion is produced, although they're aware of a booth above and behind them where projectors are heard humming. As far as Hollywood itself is concerned, the moviegoers' ideas are much more vague — if fantastically colorful! It isn't that accurate information is difficult to get; it's just that a fantastic picture of Hollywood is fun to savor with the buttered popcorn.

A minor part in the Los Angeles Valhalla is assigned to legends of a funny little bandy-legged fellow sporting a riding habit, a beret, and sunglasses. He yells at people through a megaphone, sits in a camp chair with his name stenciled on the back, and is heard every once in a while calling for a hundred dancing girls, or fifty camels, or a fresh cigarette. He's the movie director. The ridiculous figure he cuts shows that he's a foolish autocrat the really important and romantic stars are kind to tolerate.

But the legend has begun to deteriorate. In its stead comes a picture of a confident, hard working man in sport shirt and slacks on whom everyone seems to depend. His name may even go above the stars' names on posters, and gradually the audience begins to expect his name to be on top when the movie is something special.

The man behind both legends is an experienced hand in moviemaking. Before he started directing films he worked in some other job — as a scriptwriter, a cameraman, an editor, a producer, an actor, or an assistant director — that gave him the know-how for supervising the complex business of moviemaking. He's an organizer, a driving taskmaster, a patient psychologist, a knowing technician — but more than anything else he's a visualizer: his gift is to see pictures on a printed page, imagining at the same time how those pictures may be created.

A movie script reads like this:

86. EXTERIOR. THE WOODS. LATE AFTERNOON. ESTABLISHING SHOT. There follows a description of the action to be filmed, with the dialogue given.

Hundreds of dry descriptions like this are the material the director works with on each film. He knows the script well, not from study alone but because he worked on it with the writer in the final stages of its preparation. Each time he sees a script page with more action than dialogue, he can see another fifteen-hour day looming in front of him.

On a shooting day he is awake with the birds and promptly on the set or location. With his right-hand man, the cameraman, he goes over the scenes they will take, discussing and settling such matters as the kinds of shots to be taken, the position of the camera, desirable lighting effects, and the specific schedule. Then the sound engineers, the property men, the technical adviser, and the scriptwriter may want a consultation with him.

When the actors arrive, the director may want to go over the work to be done, rehearsing them if there was no chance to do this the previous day after shooting. He may not have time if there is a crowd scene scheduled; the assistant director, who is in charge of the background and incidental action, may need to have the "extras" approved and the assignment of business to them okayed. The studio publicity man may want to take pictures or introduce visitors, and knows he shouldn't come on the set unless the director consents.

Meanwhile the technicians have been completing the set-up (moviemaking term for scene). It is approved and the actors or their stand-ins go on the set so that lighting and sound levels, costume and properties contrasts, and camera framing can be checked out. Then the technicians get a break while the director focuses his attention on the actors, explaining to them the image he wants



On the set of *Ben Hur* in Rome, Head Cameraman Robert Surtees (far right) shows Charlton Heston, star of the film, how he was "framed" the next "take" of this great and spectacular movie. In the background, MGM technicians prepare a lighting instrument for use in the scene "set-up."

on the screen and how they can help him achieve it. They run over the action.

The director signals he is ready and the assistant calls for "Quiet on the set." Lights come on and the camera begins "rolling" as another assistant steps in front of it with a printed sign identifying the shot for the information of the absent editor; he bangs together wooden clappers which tell the sound man to begin recording, and actual filming is under way.

The action may last less than a minute. The whole procedure will have to be repeated for each set-up, or for many shots within a set-up. The commitment of expensive talents and equipment to an even more expensive process and use of time must be made carefully. Each "take" is treated as if it is the final performance, no matter how many times it is made. When the director is satisfied that he has a good "take," he will say laconically "We'll use that one," or "Put that one in the can," or a similar remark which signals the beginning of work on the next "take."

His own experience or the advice of the cameraman, and not the script, tells the director how to shoot the picture. Conventionally the first shot made in a set-up is known as "the master shot." It is as long as the action demands and the film reel will allow, and is taken from one camera position chosen because it includes all the action. The master shot is the audience's basic view of the action. Later takes are made to dramatize and emphasize each important moment or reaction from closer or longer views. These are "pick-up shots" important for their identification values.

Photographing the familiar showdown  
(Continued on Page 29)

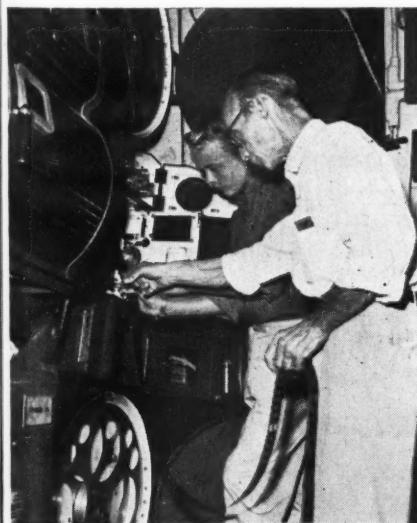


Photo by Suther Studio

Student Karl Rimer, Jr., learns on a visit to the projection booth of the Capitol Theater in his home city, Salisbury, N.C., how motion picture film is threaded through the big widescreen projector. Head Projectionist Marshall F. Ramsey, who is explaining how he cues "the leader," is one of the most experienced projectionists in the south.

# T

HE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK

THE HAPPIEST MILLIONAIRE

NO TIME FOR SERGEANTS

TALL STORY

VISIT TO A SMALL PLANET

THE MAN IN THE DOG SUIT

DEAR DELINQUENT

CLOUD SEVEN

A YOUNG LADY OF PROPERTY

THE DANCERS

THE CURIOUS SAVAGE

THE TEAHOUSE OF THE AUGUST MOON

I REMEMBER MAMA (High School Version)

GRAMERCY GHOST

MY SISTER EILEEN



USED CAR FOR SALE (new)

IT HAPPENED THIS WAY (new)

HER MAJESTY, MISS JONES (new)

FAIR EXCHANGE (new)



WRITE FOR INFORMATION AS TO AVAILABILITY.

THE GAZEBO, a comedy-melodrama by Alec Coppel (based on a story by Myra and Alec Coppel) is now available for amateur production in extensive territory.

"Suspenseful and funny . . . an immensely warm and humorous experience in the theatre. It should have a long life." — McClain, N.Y. **Journal-American**.

"Fun and entertainment for the whole family." — Radie Harris, **Hollywood-Reporter**.

"Vast, hearty and hilarious . . . the murderous fun is irresistible." — Kerr, N.Y. **Herald-Tribune**.

**The cast calls for 9 men and 3 women**

**Books, \$1.00**

**1 Interior**

**Fee, where released,  
\$50 - \$25**

**THE STORY**, as told by Chapman, in the N. Y. News: "Slezak, playing a writer of TV whodunits and whyzits, always with an eye toward inventing the almost-perfect crime, gets in a spot where he has to commit a real do-it-yourself murder. His wife, the very handsome Jayne Meadows, has become the target of blackmail. . . . Nobody can get away with blackmailing Jayne Meadows for such a girlish peccadillo, so Slezak has to silence the soandso with his six-shooter and

then secret the stiff. Jayne has just acquired at auction a gazebo . . . and it is being put up in her and Walter's suburban back yard. Best place for Slezak to plant the blackmailer is in the fresh concrete foundation of this filigreed breezeway. It isn't long, though, before the body turns up its toes again on the living room rug, and Slezak has quite a time of it, with all the district attorneys and detectives snooping around and asking mean questions."

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## **DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.**

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# THESPIANS

**Charley's Aunt**, Troupe 254, B.M.C. Durfee High School, Fall River, Massachusetts,  
Barbara Wellington, Sponsor



**The Egg and I**, Troupe 1871, Arvada,  
Colorado, Senior High School,  
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**The Pot Boiler**, Troupe 1995, Clear Creek High School, League City, Texas,  
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Photo, Clarke



**The Happiest Millionaire**, Troupe 817, Central High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma, Iona B. Freeman, Sponsor

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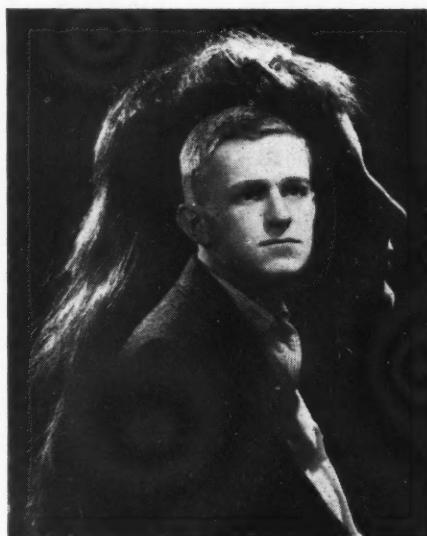
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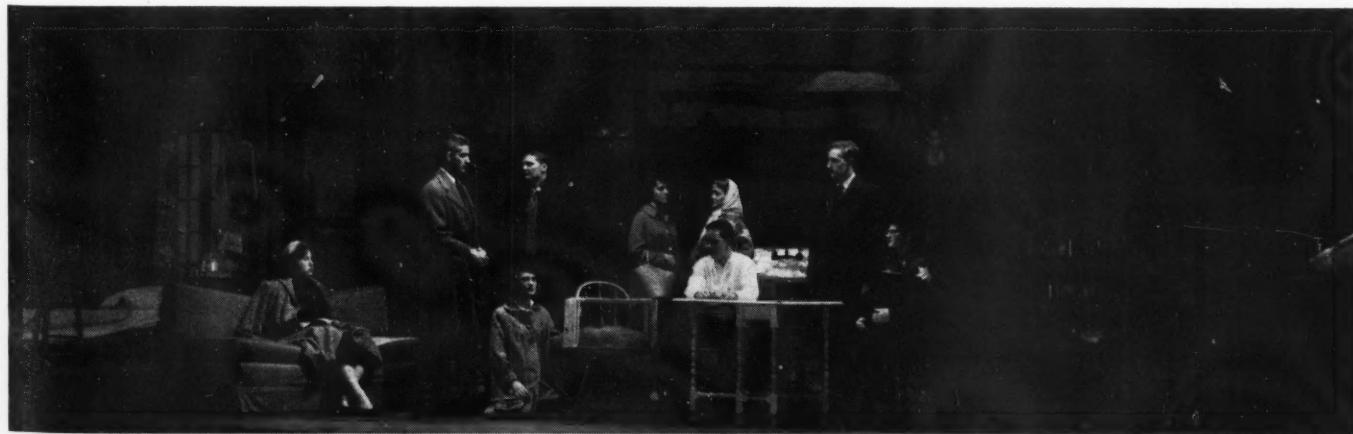
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# THESPians

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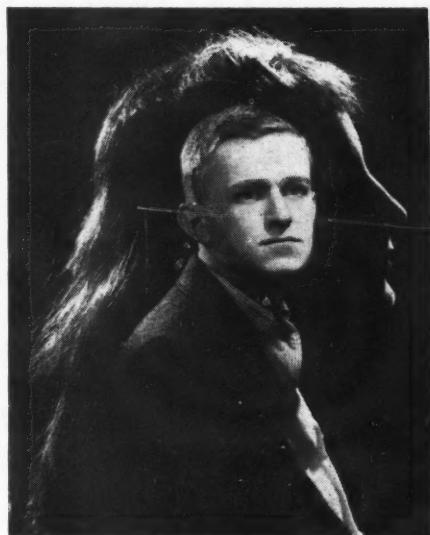
# IN ACTION



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Glenda Dunlop, Sponsor



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Norman Moyer, Sponsor



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Iowa, High School, Clayton Liggett, Director



**The Diary of Anne Frank**, Troupe 420, Willis High School, Delaware, Ohio, Mrs. N. S. Hearn, Sponsor



**Witness for the Prosecution** as produced by the Shreveport Little Theater, Margaret Mary Young, Designer, and John Wray Young, Director

OUR COMMUNITY THEATERS

## SHREVEPORT LITTLE THEATER

By CHARLES R. TRUMBO  
and POLLYANN

**I**N 1835 Henry M. Shreve was commissioned by the United States government to open the Red River to navigation. His assignment was to clear a log-jam which the early explorers referred to as the "Great Raft." The size of this log-jam had even then become almost legendary, some saying it was 130 miles long while others insisted it was 160 to 180 miles. Shreve established a permanent camp or "home-base," and for six years, among others things, he used snag boats as battering rams in his successful effort to clear the river.

In 1839 Shreve Town or Shreve's Landing, as his camp or "home-base" had become known, was incorporated as Shreveport. Here the annual Louisiana State Fair is held. Shreveport is the home of Centenary College, one of the oldest educational institutions west of the Mississippi. During the latter part of the War Between the States the capital of the Confederate States of America was moved here.

In the spring when the many red bud trees bloom Shreveport becomes, to those with imagination, a "proud Southern Belle" with her shoulders draped in rose colored lace. From these trees she has become known as the "Red-bud city of America."

The Shreveport Little Theater was founded in 1922. Its charter members were Julie Rogers, Olivia Allen, Opal Woodley Parten, and Duncan Allen Brown, five adventurous people. Harry Huguenot, a former professional actor, was also active in its early founding. The organization prospered. They moved into their own home in 1927. It is one of the finest examples of English Rural Architecture in America. The auditorium, thirty-eight feet to the peak, is studded with heavy wooden beams. The rose

colored seats were chosen especially to harmonize with the lovely color of the birch paneled walls. The theater has a capacity of 225 people. The stage floor is 55 by 27 feet and the proscenium arch is 17 feet high.

For nearly thirty years the director-designer team, John Wray Young and Margaret Mary Young, has made the Shreveport Little Theater a model of community theater practice.

Graduating from the University of Iowa in 1929, Mr. Young became director of the Sioux City Little Theater, Sioux City, Iowa. On October 5, the same year, John and Mary Young were married. *The Queen's Husband* was in rehearsal, so only the weekend could be taken for this important event. Mrs. Young then began her career as a technical director. She received her degree from the University of Iowa in 1930.

From Sioux City the Youngs went in 1932 to the Duluth Playhouse in Duluth, Minnesota, and from there to the Shreveport Little Theater which they have called "home" ever since.

For the past two summers Mr. and Mrs. Young have been visiting lecturers at the National Community Theater Center held on the campus of the University of Wisconsin. They also went last summer to the University of Denver where they presented a Graduate Seminar in Contemporary Theater. In August they appeared at the Convention of the National Catholic Theater Conference at Notre Dame University.

Summer before last the University of Denver granted a Doctor's degree to Edward H. Brown whose dissertation was *The Work of the Youngs at the Shreveport Little Theater*.

Mr. Young is the author of *The Community Theater and How it Works* and

*Directing the Play from Selection to Opening Night*. These books are used as text books at both the University of Wisconsin and Denver in their summer courses.

Mr. Young was president of the American Educational Theater Association, and had done important work with the American National Theater and Academy, the National Theater Conference, and the Southwest Theater Conference.

Along with his other duties, Mr. Young last summer addressed the University of Michigan Drama Conference. He has also been a guest director at Pasadena Playhouse.

He and Mrs. Young have their home in Shreveport where, with their two children, Jock and Jill, they have enjoyed many years of normal community living. Here they have made their extraordinary contribution to the American community theater.

For twenty-nine years the Shreveport Little Theater operated on the open membership plan, but far-sightedness on the part of its leaders caused the theater in 1952 to go on the closed membership plan. It came about simply: the demand for memberships gave the theater capacity audiences for as long as it seemed practical to run. At that point each year they close their membership and begin waiting-lists for the next season. Their audience is assured, and they have no box-office sale. There is also the financial comfort of having money in the bank for the year's expenses before the season begins.

A membership in the Shreveport Little Theater may be secured by paying the annual dues of eight dollars. This entitles the member to a reserved seat for each production and carries the privilege of applying for active participation in any of the theater's departments. A twenty-five dollar Patron membership gives the Patron two season tickets, and inclusion in the Playbill's Patron list.

Once a member of the Shreveport Little Theater, the individual has only

(Continued on Page 28)

# The Sound of Music

By CHARLES L. JONES

BROADWAY'S and America's favorite contemporary musical comedy writing team, Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, have done it again! Their new musical play, *The Sound of Music*, which is now playing at the sumptuous Lunt-Fontanne Theater and starring the incomparable Mary Martin adds another really solid hit to their growing list of extraordinary successes.

*The Sound of Music* is based on the fascinating and heart-warming autobiographical novel, *The Trapp Family Singers* by Maria Augusta Trapp. Famous in Europe for their concerts, the Trapp family made an equally famous name for themselves in the United States where they have resided since escaping Nazi oppression during World War II. The play-writing team of Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse, who penned such notable Broadway hits as *Life with Father* and the Pulitzer Prize winning *State of the Union*, are responsible for the musical's book.

As the house lights lower, the audience is aware of another of Rodgers and Hammerstein's unique departures from the conventionalities of a typical Broadway musical comedy. There is no overture of all the music before the opening of the show. Instead, chimes ring softly as the curtain rises on the interior of the Nonnberg Abbey in Austria. Postulants and nuns are seen going about their daily chores and offering prayers.

Maria, a new postulant at the Abbey, is nowhere about, however. Her love for nature has led her to the top of a lofty mountain near the Abbey overlooking the countryside where she is found day-dreaming beneath the fragrant blossoms of a tree. Here Maria sings the title song from the musical, "The Sound of Music," wherein she reveals how wondrous and soothing Mother Nature can be.

The following morning in the office of the Mother Abbess, the unconventional behavior of Maria is discussed and the sisters decide that she is too fun-loving and exuberant for Abbey life in the song entitled, "Maria." Called into the office, Maria is told that she should leave the Abbey temporarily and, in time, if she finds she really wants to become a nun she may return.

Maria is sent by the Mother Abbess to the villa of Captain Georg Von Trapp nearby to act as governess to his seven children who range in ages from five to sixteen. The children's mother has been dead for five years, and in place of love and understanding they know only marital obedience to the commands of their stern disciplinarian father.



Maria arrives at the Von Trapp villa to become governess to the captain's seven children and wins their devotion by teaching them the joy of singing.

Arriving at the villa wearing a dowdy dress and carrying her guitar and carpet bag, Maria presents a ludicrous picture in contrast to her luxurious new surroundings. The children ridicule her and reveal their dislike for governesses. However, Maria quickly wins them over when she teaches them how much joy there is in singing with the tuneful novelty song, "Do, Re, Mi," through which the children learn the scale. Maria is forever endeared to the children on a violent, stormy night shortly after her arrival. In a charming scene in Maria's tiny attic bedroom, all seven children flee their own rooms to the safety of her bed to escape the ominous crashes of thunder and flashing streaks of lightning. To bolster their morale, all huddle together and sing loudly a lively Austrian song called "The Lonely Goatherd."

Having been gone to Vienna for several weeks, Captain Von Trapp returns to the villa and finds the children singing. Angered at first because he had always forbade the children to sing, he nearly dismisses Maria as governess. However, he soon realizes that she has taught them a wonderful love of life and recognizes their complete devotion to her.

The captain brings with him from Vienna a beautiful and sophisticated Elsa Schroeder and announces at a lavish party in her honor that they will be married. The children are horrified, but as fate would have it, the captain discovers in time that he is really in love with the simple charms of Maria who would make a better mother for his children than Elsa with her brittle elegance.

Feeling that she has wrongfully come between Elsa and Captain Von Trapp and has committed a sin in the sight of God to love him, Maria returns to the Abbey to seek the advice of the Mother Abbess. Maria begs to be allowed to

spend the rest of her life at the Abbey in repentance, but is told by the Mother Abbess that "Man's love for a woman is holy" and that God has found his place for her in sharing the love of the captain and his children. She challenges Maria with the most beautiful and inspiring song of the musical, "Climb Every Mountain."

Maria and Captain Von Trapp are married a few days later in the Abbey chapel and, on returning to the villa from a honeymoon, find that Austria has been invaded by the Nazis. The captain refuses to fly the German flag or show allegiance to the victors. Because the captain is a retired officer of the Austrian navy, the Nazis order him to report to Berlin for military assignment. Stalling for time, Maria tells the Admiral he cannot report at the designated time since the family is scheduled to sing at a music festival in the village. It is agreed the captain will report immediately following their performance.

While the Trapp Family Singers perform on the stage of the concert hall, a Nazi escort waits off-stage in the wings to take the captain to Berlin. In a clever maneuver, the family sings the novelty song, "So Long, Farewell," which calls for one member to leave the stage after each verse. In this manner, all the Von Trapps escape the concert hall before the Nazi escort can apprehend them.

While soldiers search in vain for them, they hide within a walled garden of Maria's beloved Abbey. Realizing the borders of Austria will be patrolled, the family makes its escape over the mountain Maria knows so well.

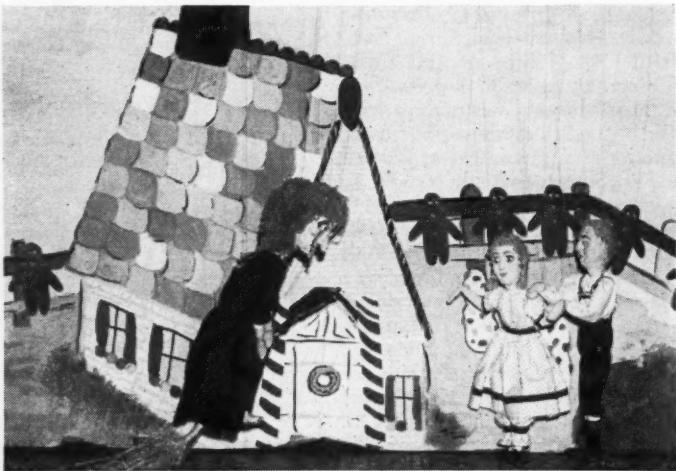
*The Sound of Music* will be another of those rare Broadway musicals which has enough beauty, simplicity, and depth of meaning to please any type of audience, both young and old, everywhere.



Hansel and Gretel with 13 angels in the Temple High School production

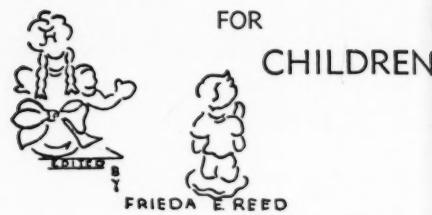


The backstage orchestra in the presentation of **Hansel and Gretel**, Troupe 1259, Temple, Texas, High School, Nita Huckabee, Sponsor



The old witch and the gingerbread house with Hansel and Gretel

## THEATER



### PUPPET VERSION OF HANSEL AND GRETEL CHARMED CHILDREN

**A**CCORDING to Mrs. Nita Huckabee, Sponsor of Troupe 1259, Temple, Texas, this group's venture into Children's Theater was highly successful. The following story is Mrs. Huckabee's graphic account of this project.

"Hansel and Gretel came to Temple last school year, and children from the first through the twelfth grades had a good time watching the pair outsmart the old witch. Best Thespian Kaki Dowling and Five-Star Thespian Mary Sue Hooks became the voices relating the time-honored story to children all over town.

"Conceived by Durward Howard, creative and enterprising band and orchestra director, and assisted by Warren Kirkpatrick, interesting and interested art teacher, a puppet Hansel and Gretel theater 'played' every elementary school in town, delighting several thousand elementary grade youngsters. A 'command' performance at Temple High School was a 'complete sell-out' as tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students screamed their encouragement to the beleaguered pair before and SRO audience.

"Actually, the musical drama was based on Humperdinck's opera. The school orchestra played behind the scenes for the performance, with complete instrumentation by 30 musicians. The cast included 45 high school boys and girls as musicians, actors, vocalists, and art students in the production.

"The class of second-year art students constructed string marionettes eighteen inches high of papier-mache. There was the traditional old witch, quite horrible in her somber black.

"Hansel was a naive young lad with a burr haircut (of yellow yarn) and brown felt leider-hosen. Gretel was a winsome lass with yellow pig-tails and white pinafore over a blue dress. The art class spent six weeks making this stage family which included also the sad little father and mother, the sand man and the 'thirteen angels.' The witch turned out to be the star of the show.

"After the marionettes were finished, the next step was learning to manipulate them, a feat which the dexterous students learned to do with a great deal of aplomb.

"The stage, which the art students constructed, had a proscenium opening four by five feet. The young artists designed a different set for each of the three acts.

# MATTHEWS LIBRARY S. C., TEMPE, ARIZ.

## RECOMMENDED PLAYS FOR CHILDREN

### Fairy-Tale Plays

Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp  
Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves  
Alice in Wonderland  
Cinderella  
The Elves and the Shoemaker  
Jack and the Beanstalk  
King Midas and the Golden Touch  
Little Red Riding Hood  
Peter Peter, Pumpkin Eater  
Pinocchio  
The Plain Princess  
Prince Fairyfoot  
The Princess and the Swineherd  
The Puppet Prince  
Puss in Boots  
Rapunzel and the Witch  
Rumpelstiltskin  
Simple Simon  
The Sleeping Beauty  
Snow White and Rose Red  
The Three Bears  
The Wizard of Oz

### Modern Plays

Crazy Cricket Farm  
The Ghost of Mr. Penny  
Junket  
Little Lee Bobo  
Mr. Popper's Penguins  
Mystery at the Old Fort  
The Panda and the Spy  
Seven Little Rebels

### Historical Plays

Arthur and the Magic Sword  
Buffalo Bill  
Daniel Boone  
The Indian Captive  
Marco Polo  
The Prince and the Pauper  
Young Hickory

### Plays of Popular Stories

Five Little Peppers  
Hans Brinker and the Silver Skates  
Hansel and Gretel  
Heidi  
Hiawatha  
Huckleberry Finn  
Little Women  
The Nuremberg Stove  
Oliver Twist  
The Pied Piper of Hamelin  
Rip Van Winkle  
Robin Hood  
Robinson Crusoe  
The Sandalwood Box  
Tom Sawyer  
Treasure Island

### Fantasies

The Farmer and the Fox  
Flibertygibbet  
The Good Witch of Boston  
The Land of the Dragon  
The Wonderful Tang

*The plays listed above will be found fully described and illustrated in our catalogue*

## THE CHILDREN'S THEATRE PRESS CLOVERLOT, ANCHORAGE, KENTUCKY

Then, when the performance was over, boys and girls who handled the marionettes, demonstrated to the audience how they made the characters perform. This proved to be an exceedingly interesting part of the program.

"Hansel and Gretel" marked the first venture for these Temple students into theater for children. The warmth and enthusiasm of the young audiences came as somewhat of a surprise to these 'older' boys and girls as well as to the teachers. All agreed that this six-week unit of the school year on such a program for children was indeed worthwhile, since the script and the students' creative source

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FEBRUARY, 1960

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"So the little children were treated to a marionette show in the familiar surroundings of their own school, and yet were given the feeling that a 'real show' had come to town. This natural excitement of a show coming to their building helped to create among the children the desired atmosphere for this enchanting fairy tale.

"The amazing reaction came from the high school audience. Because the show had caused such a stir among the school children, the high school student body wanted to see it, and the exuberance with which these 800 followed the adventures of the innocent but unfortunate children proved that Children's Theater is good even for the sophisticated high school student.

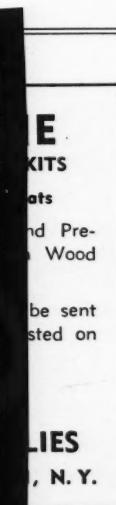
"Another of the highlights in the dramatics program of Temple High School was the presentation of the one-act play, Thornton Wilder's *Happy Journey*. Here Kaki Dowling received honors as 'best actress,' being named to the all-star cast at the district Interscholastic League meet in Austin.

"Seeking a varied experience, the high school Thespian Troupe 1259 also presented *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* and *Father of the Bride*.

"The abundance of properties required for *Father of the Bride* posed a fine contrast with *Happy Journey*. This was a lesson which the sponsor emphasized to her high school actors — that it is not only the acting which makes the play.

"Previously the Thespians had presented *The Importance of Being Earnest* with a stylized all black and white set and costuming. As a matter of fact, white wrought iron furniture with black cushions for the interior, and the same without the cushions for exterior, comprised the furniture.

"These features, along with choral and antiphonal reading recitals, made up the dramatics program for our high school last year."





**Beggar on Horseback**, Troupe 841, Grand Junction, Colorado, High School,  
Jim Simpson, Sponsor, 1958-59

**BEGGAR ON HORSEBACK**  
Grand Junction, Colo., High School

BECAUSE of its many scenes, multiple roles, fantastic costumes, full musical score, and unavailable scripts, *Beggar on Horseback* was nearly rejected by our production committee. Because it wasn't we are grateful, and like many groups before us, still surprised at the simplicity with which this uniquely powerful play can be produced.

The play is a travesty in the form of a young composer's nightmarish dream after he has considered giving up the girl he loves to marry a wealthy one so that his creative efforts could be subsidized. In addition to a grand piano and an easy chair which stay on stage in all scenes, this play stages a third floor apartment, Grand Central Station, a mansion, an elevator, three offices, a French cabaret, a sunny cottage, a courtroom, a royal bedroom, a public park, a four-ring circus zoo, and an execution chamber. With the exception of the "rollaway" units of our realistic apartment set, scenery tended toward expressionism and was either carried in, rolled in, or flown in. Nearly all units served double duty, either by being reversed or through rearrangement. Use was made of back-lighted silhouettes against translucent screens, dual-painted scenery coupled with change of light for instant changes of locale, small revolving units, and "live" statues, portraits, and furniture. By lowering our gold concert curtains we could play transition scenes on our fore-stage while scenery was being struck and set. Often this was unnecessary, especially when hidden "grips" and our light man caused "miraculous" changes in view of the audience.

Costuming and making up thirty-eight actors to play one hundred and twenty roles are always a challenge. We simplified the problem by using black turtle-neck sweaters, trousers, and skirts for all duplicate roles and adding accessories. We used ballerina makeup and inch long eyelashes on dream personnel and chose

increasingly exaggerated costumes for main characters.

This play shaped up quite rapidly during our nine week rehearsal schedule because we constantly practiced timing, listening, and interpretation, and because the dream becomes a series of mechanical movements set to music. For troupes who would like to do this show, and it can certainly be done effectively on a far less elaborate scale, we would strongly advise that organizational work be done at least six months ahead of rehearsals, use strong members for technical work, and play each role as though it carried star billing. Do this and *Beggar on Horseback* can become one of your favorite productions.

JIM SIMPSON  
Sponsor, Troupe 841

**SOLID GOLD CADILLAC**  
Western Military Academy, Alton, Ill.

FOR A riotous evening of entertainment, try *Solid Gold Cadillac*. This lively comedy by Howard Teichmann and George S. Kaufman is especially well suited for a dramatic group that has an abundance of talented young men.

The story deals with little old Mrs. Partridge, who goes down to Wall Street

**PLAYS  
OF THE MONTH**

Edited By EARL BLANK

to attend a stockholders' meeting of General Products Corporation. She asks so many questions that the "Four Ugly Corporation Directors" give her a job in the hope of keeping her quiet. Eventually she foils a plot to throw her out by discovering that the company has just forced one of their own subsidiaries out of business. Thousands of letters begin pouring in naming Laura Partridge as their proxy. She then realizes her new found power, fires the directors, and takes over the business along with her Prince Charming, Ed McKeever.

The four scenes were condensed to three; and by means of simultaneous staging and spotting each acting area separately, the changes from one office to another were made very quickly. These rapid changes greatly added to the lively spirit of the play itself.

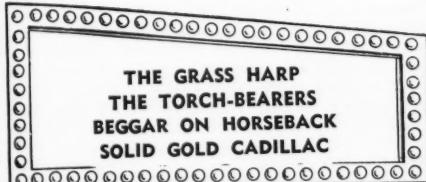
Harmonizing wall papers covering the three office areas, and a painting of the New York skyline outside our usual French window greatly transformed the old living room set, thereby giving us three distinct acting areas, which were still in harmony.

Costuming was simple. In the beginning Mrs. Partridge was costumed to look like an over-dressed, though somewhat dowdy, actress, who had seen better days. As she progressed in her job, her clothes changes suggested a more prosperous look. Silver-grey hair spray added age to the otherwise young men playing the parts of the directors.

Try *Solid Gold Cadillac*. It will be an experience long to be remembered. Perhaps your principal will say, as ours did, "Certainly this is your most unusual play."

MAJOR R. P. MARTIN  
Sponsor, Troupe 397





### THE GRASS HARP

Pampa, Texas, Sr. High School

A PLAY which lends itself to beauty, in interpretation of character, and mastery of emotions, is Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp*. Although the play reflects humor along with fantasy, the total picture reveals real people with true emotions.

The story concerns three members of the Talbo household: Dolly Talbo, a delightful but eccentric "little old lady"; her nephew Collin, a sensitive teenager; and Catherine Creek, a defiant Negro servant, who leave their comfortable home owned by Dolly's sister, Cerena, to move into a tree-house in the nearby woods. They are joined by a retired judge, Charlie Cool, whose philosophy enables him to understand their struggle to find a simple existence.

Thirteen minor roles offer versatile characterizations which can be achieved through "type-casting" if necessary. However, the six major character parts must be played by students with exceptional talent, intelligence, and depth of feeling.

The major problem in staging *The Grass Harp* is the change from the dining room of the Talbot house in Act I, Scene 1, to the tree-house in the woods for Act I, Scene 3. We handled the second scene setting in the town very easily by spotting various areas in front of the curtain where the townspeople were "picked up." During this brief scene, a crew was quietly making the transformation on stage. However, we were forced to delay the curtain for our final scene, as we returned to the original dining room setting.



The Torch-Bearers, Troupe 538, Janesville, Wisc., High School,  
Roger Emelson, Sponsor, 1958-59

We stylized our woods setting for fantasy treatment. The tree house was built on a platform, which served as the trunk. Both trunk and one large overhanging limb were covered with papier-mâché and painted. Foliage was a drop. Shrub screens, supplemented with actual brush, were used to represent forest growth.

HELEN SCHAEFER  
Sponsor, Troupe 1010

### THE TORCH-BEARERS

Janesville, Wisc., Sr. High School

VIVID, yet pliable characters and plenty of stage-action with just enough "slapstick" to please everyone make George Kelly's three-act comedy, *The Torch-Bearers*, a delightful challenge for high school production. Set in the early nineteen-twenties, the play is a satire on the Little Theaters that were then beginning to spring up throughout

the country. Although dialogue is brimming with boisterous humor, it is not wanting in its subtle insinuations.

The plot in brief: Suave, cynical Fred Ritter returns home from a business trip to find his gorgeous, but gullible, wife Paula submerged in the activities of a fledgling civic theater. Dazzled by the unfounded praises of Mrs. Pampinelli, the officious directress who has managed to secure the acting-abilities of the community misfits, Paula ignores her husband's unveiled disapproval and joins the crusade to "Raise the torch of essential culture." Having obtained the local Horticultural Hall for their endeavors, they render a performance replete with doors that won't open, sound effects that go off at the wrong times, a few extremely audible backstage arguments, and the untimely swooning of one of the actors. Finally, a tearful, but resolute Paula decides to sacrifice art for her home.

We used two separate sets for *The Torch-Bearers*. Acts one and three take place in the Ritter's drawing room which we furnished with regard for the flamboyance at that time fashionable. Act two depicts the posterior of the backstage area during the "play within the play." Two doors are required, providing an occasional glimpse of the players whom we illuminated with a ghastly combination of colors. To complete the picture, we costumed the play in the nineteen-twenty styles, resplendent with rhinestones and plumes, adding much to the fun of the cast as well as to the evident enjoyment of our audiences.

SUSAN WESTBY  
Thespian, Troupe 538



The Grass Harp, Troupe 1010, Pampa, Texas, Sr. High School,  
Helen Schaefer, Sponsor, 1958-59

### PUBLISHERS

Beggar on Horseback, The Torch-Bearers, Samuel French, New York City  
The Grass Harp, Solid Gold Cadillac, Dramatists Play Service, New York City

# The Thespian Chatter

BEAUMONT, TEXAS

Troupe 1424

This year, marking our debut in National Thespians, has been an exciting and memorable one for us all. Although we participated in many events, our big project for the year was our Interscholastic League endeavor, *Scenes from Agamemnon* by Aeschylus. This was interesting and rewarding for everyone, not only because it was an unusual experience, but also because for the first time in ten years we won the District one-act play contest and competed in the Regional competition. While vying for regional honors our Best Boy Thespian of the year, Carl Deese, won the coveted Best Acting award, while our Best Girl Thespian, Joyce Crow, gave a memorable performance as Cassandra. We also performed *Agamemnon* for the area Community Players Theater conference where it was received very warmly. This summer marks the breakup of our charter Thespian troupe, but we can look back on this past year and know we did our best. — *Faith Gray, Scribe*

LEWISTOWN, MONTANA

Troupe 701

Our troupe, eager for members was very pleased with the results of the junior class play, *Remarkable Incident at Carson Corners*. Those eligible for membership demonstrated their dramatic ability by presenting extemporaneous skits at initiation. More laughter and excitement came during the following month when the Thespians produced an original skit impersonating the school faculty members at a pep rally. *And the Lamp Went Out*, a one act play, proved to be the climax at the annual junior class Variety Show. In our school we have Pledge Thespians who work backstage to earn points towards membership. They are anxiously awaiting the day when they too can become members of Troupe 701. — *Scribe*

PROVO, UTAH

Troupe 454

We had a really full year at Brigham Young University Laboratory School. During the last few years, our director, M. C. Golightly, has been sponsoring a remodeling of our Little Theater area, and this year, we have finally made it possible to utilize it in the way intended. Instead of concentrating on larger productions in the big auditorium at our school, we concentrate on smaller and more productions in the Little Theater, which we call "Patchwork Theater Productions." They have been received with enthusiasm by all. Instead of playing to half-empty halls, because people stay home to watch television, we play to full halls. (Of course, the Patchwork Theater holds 77, but that's better than 77 in a hall meant for 700.) We gain much from this informal theater, too. Besides working in the project, we perform in the Circle Theater Area, with a full overhead grid and set scenery. We did *Kind Lady* this year. It was a great success; Sally Kirkman, who played the kind lady, won the Best Actress award of the year. We also won the State Sweepstakes Trophy for the third year in succession at the State Interpretative Meet, and Sally took best actress of the meet in a play called *Eternal Life*, which was a real thrill. Then, other important plays of the year in the Patchwork Theater were *Quiet Please!* and *Why I Am A Bachelor*, and others. We are really active as our instructor is State Representative, and we had the honor of initiating two troupes into Thespians. That was fun! One of them, at Tooele, Utah, initiated 100 members in for charter members! We are looking forward to next year already! We also won The Samuel French Plaque the second year in succession! — *Jeni Jacobs, Secretary*

PUEBLO, COLORADO

Troupe 37

This fall a new facet in drama production was displayed to Puebloans from Centennial High School's stage. According to Jim Rountree, Centennial's enthusiastic new Drama Sponsor, for the first time a Readers' Theater was produced in the Colorado area. This kind of program places emphasis on facial and voice expressions rather than acting. The promising young actors and actresses read from leading playwrights and authors. This was one of the biggest productions at Centennial, since the business men of Pueblo supported the program.

Mr. Rountree will also produce a *Christmas Carol* in December and *Tea House of the August Moon* in May. — *Rita Butler, Secretary*

MONTEREY, CALIF.

Troupe 2000

Troupe 2000 is currently preparing a December 11-12-17-18-19 production of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. Our little theater is undergoing a virtually-complete transformation, with wings on levels being built into the audience DR and DL, with the Van Daan's attic being built above the stage floor upstage. Curtis Cureton, troupe sponsor, is directing this production. John Pate of our technical student-staff is completely renovating our sound system for this produc-

tion. We're all dedicated to a moving, honest interpretation of this thrilling drama.

Troupe 2000 has just finished co-sponsoring (on the MUHS campus) a Coast Forensic League speech arts tournament (held October 31); some seventeen northern California schools attended, participating in six major events. — *Allene Venegas, Secretary*

HARTLAND, WISC.

Troupe 1932

The evening of May 4 was a big event for us at Arrowhead High School who are interested in dramatics. At that time our Thespian Charter was installed, and 12 students were initiated into Troupe 1932.

Since the beginning of Arrowhead three years ago, our dramatic group, under the advisement of Merilee Masterson, has been preparing for the honor of belonging to this society. For us this honor is a beginning, not an end. With the interest which has been created for dramatics in our school, we see a great future before us.

The highlight of this year was our major production, *Ladies of the Jury*, a delightful comedy which drew the largest crowd for any dramatic production thus far. We also presented several one-act plays, five radio productions, and assembly skits which were written, directed, and acted by our dramatic group.

This year has been a success for us. We are looking forward to many more. — *Dianne Pardon, Secretary*

PRINCETON, ILL.

Troupe 1120

Thespian Troupe 1120 had a busy and successful 1958-59 season. Our biggest money-making projects were selling snacks at the

## 1960 — REGIONAL CONFERENCES — 1960

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| ARKANSAS               | Hendrix College, Conway, Marie Thost Pierce, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 301, Marked Tree High School, April 28.   |
| FLORIDA (Central)      | Chamberlain High School, Tampa, Winifred Lively, Sponsor, Troupe 165, Program Chairman; Paul Fague, Central Florida Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 177, Wm. R. Boone High School, Orlando, February 27.   |
| FLORIDA (Northern)     | Roosevelt Hotel, Jacksonville, Ardath E. Pierce, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 942, Duncan E. Fletcher High School, Jacksonville Beach, February 26, 27.   |
| GEORGIA                | University of Georgia, Athens, Mrs. John Seanor, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 90, Fitzgerald High School, Fitzgerald, February 19, 20.  |
| MICHIGAN               | Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, Margaret L. Meyn, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 455, Benton Harbor High School, March 19.  |
| NEW ENGLAND            | Emerson College, Boston, Massachusetts, June Mitchell, Emerson College, Program Chairman; Barbara Wellington, New England Province Director and Sponsor, Troupe 254, B.M.C. Durfee High School, Fall River, Massachusetts; Nancy Fay Fox, Massachusetts Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 987, Marblehead High School, February, 13. |
| NEW YORK (Eastern)     | Port Jefferson High School, Port Jefferson, Charles L. Jones, Regional Director and Sponsor, Ruth Becker, co-sponsor, Troupe 861, May 14.  |
| NEW YORK (Western)     | Drama Festival, State University of N. Y. Agricultural and Tech. Institute, Alfred, New York, Mort Clark, Program Chairman; Robert Timerson, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 1286, Trumansburg High School, May 4-8.   |
| OHIO (Northeast)       | Harvey High School, Painesville, Janet Hamman, Sponsor, Troupe 664, Program Chairman; Florence E. Hill, State Director and Sponsor, Troupe 66, Lehman High School, Canton, November 5.   |
| OKLAHOMA               | Enid High School, Enid, Mrs. Delyte Poindexter, Sponsor, Troupe 1263, Program Chairman; Maybelle Conger, Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 822, Central High School, Oklahoma City, March 12.  |
| PENNSYLVANIA (Western) | Mt. Lebanon Sr. High School, Pittsburgh, Julian T. Myers, Sponsor, Troupe 1603, Program Chairman; Jean Donahay, Western Pennsylvania Regional Director and Sponsor, Troupe 187, Brasheer Jr. Sr. High School, Brownsville, April 30.   |

Conference Speech Contest of which we were hosts, and sponsoring three one-act plays in December. The plays, *Good-Bye to the Clown*, *Fog*, and *Page of Destiny*, were directed by Thespian members, and the casts consisted of freshmen, sophomores, and juniors, so that they might gain experience to become future Thespian members.

The senior class play, *The Curious Savage*, was cast entirely of Thespian members. Under the capable directing of Hugo Gartner, the speech teacher, and everyone connected with the play, it was a great success. — *Nancy Smith, Secretary*

#### ROCHESTER, N. H.

#### Troupe 823

The night of November 20, 1958, marked the opening of the acting season for Troupe 823 with the play, *Papa Was a Preacher*. One has to imagine being a preacher's child with the ill-fortune of having an eccentric old maid for a next-door neighbor. This particular neighbor thought it unbefitting for preacher's children to roller skate on the sidewalk, dance rock'n roll, and other pursuits of ordinary teenagers.

Probably our most enjoyable work of the year involved *The Egg and I*. This posed a problem to our director who had to organize a large cast and simultaneously assemble a list of numerous and varied properties, such as a live pullet, a bathtub, and an iron stove. Somehow everything worked out all right for a successful production.

The quiet English atmosphere of Katherine Mansfield's *A Cup of Tea* was a welcome contrast. We received a rating of "good" for this at the state festival. — *James Appleby, Secretary*

#### LAKE CHARLES, LA.

#### Troupe 471

Thespian Troupe 471 started off the year with a Constitution Day program. Our first dramatic production was *Three on a Bench*. Later in the year, the Thespians participated in the Homecoming show, *Evening in Paris*, and Monique Fluery, our treasurer, who was born in Paris, was mistress of ceremonies. In the spring we entered rally with a one-act drama, *Hour of Honor*, and placed superior in district rally, and excellent in state rally. At district rally, Margaret O'Meara received an award for best character actress. Two of our Thespians received awards in a state-wide writing contest, one for a play and a short story, and the other for a short story. The Thespians have also contributed to other programs at the school, and plans are now in progress to hold Thespian initiation in an assembly program. — *Jo Ann Lawlor, Secretary*

#### DICKINSON, N. D.

#### Troupe 1640

Last year Thespian Troupe 1640 produced the three-act play, *What a Life*. The title was very appropriate because what a life it was! We experienced practices at 7:00 a.m. every morning. We joined with Acapella choir to present the annual production of *Unto Thy Doors*. For our spring production we chose Oliver Goldsmith's *She Stoops to Conquer*. Tony's half-eaten apple and Sir Charles' forgotten wig added a little spice to the eighteenth-century comedy. A cutting of this play went to the state festival in April. The annual Children's Theater, *Rumpelstiltskin*, was staged for the grade school children.

In order to sell tickets for the spring production, we had a contest — the losing side putting on a potluck supper for the winners. It was very elaborate — glorified hamburgers and paper plates.

We closed our year with the presentation of Best Thespian at our Awards Assembly. — *Jeanne Weber, Scribe*

#### BLACKSVILLE, W. VA.

#### Troupe 54

At long last a new stage is promised to us by our Board of Education. We have been using a portable stage for so long that we had almost given up hope, but now we can look forward to bigger and better productions.

On May 1, 1959, twenty-two members were initiated into the Thespian Troupe 54 at Clay-

Battelle High School. The initiation followed the Annual Thespian Banquet.

Members of Troupe 54 presented their annual operetta on May 13, 1959, which was entitled *Davy Crockett, King of the Wild Frontier*. Three seniors and two sophomores were presented with awards for their outstanding Thespian work Class Night, May 17, 1959. — *Sheila Eddy, President*

#### YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

#### Troupe 1126

Everybody on stage... fix that potted plant... straighten your moustache... start the music... curtain going up on the 1958-59 season of Ursuline Chapter of the National Thespian Society.

First we traveled to Canton with a cutting from the play, *Growing Pains*, presented at the National Thespian Conference. We were proud when we received four certificates for outstanding performances. The time of mistletoe and holly brought with it a traditional Christmas program of songs and dances. Colleens and leprechauns joined us for Saint Patrick's Day, and gay songs and rollicking dances marked the occasion. "How can you sit there calmly eating muffins, when we're in this horrible trouble, I can't make out..." The speaker is Jack and the eater's Algry and the trouble... well... the trouble was *The Importance of Being Earnest*, the senior class play presented May 2 through May 5. The three-act play was done in costumes and settings of the 19th century and food of the 20th. It's time now to ring down the final curtain of this season but the curtain will rise again in September with new Thespians and a new program of performances. — *Pat Riley, Secretary*

#### TONASKET, WASH.

#### Troupe 910

The Tonasket Thespian Troupe 910 was indeed fortunate last year. We put on numerous three-act plays, one-act plays, monologues, and skits. Something new was tried this year — a play with no props. We went to the International Drama Festival in Canada and took two one-act plays. We received several honorable mentions. The troupe went to the regional conference at Wenatchee. We took one one-act play to the Okanogan County Drama Festival. To pay homage to the seniors graduating this year the remaining Thespians put on a delicious

banquet. We were stuffed with fried chicken, scalloped potatoes, salad, relishes, corn, ice cream, and cake — the perfect finish for a wonderful year. Last summer we sent two delegates to the Summer School of Drama at Washington State University. — *Linda E. Buchut, Scribe*

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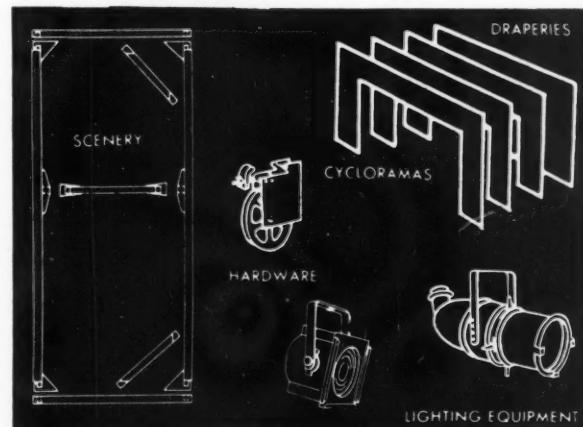
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## SHREVEPORT

(Continued from Page 20)

to pay his annual fee to remain in the organization. However, with the present fluctuation in population, each membership renewal period, which comes in the spring, finds fifteen to twenty per cent of the memberships open. The waiting list has never filled this quota so that there is a period each summer when new members are sought.

Working always closely with the director, Mr. Young, the play reading committee holds about twenty-five meetings a year for the exchange of books, discussion, and evaluation. They keep a chart on every play read, with recorded reactions from the five readers. A minus sign indicates disapproval for the theater's use. A plus sign shows that it seems a possibility, while a zero mark indicates a negative reaction. As these marks accumulate, the chart begins to show the plays which seem desirable, those which could be used if necessary, and those rejected.

Play titles are seldom announced until shortly before the tryout date. The reason for this is that actors in the theater have been known to cast themselves mentally in roles before the actual results of the tryouts. The second disadvantage of prereading the tryout play is the unfair advantages it gives to those who have read it in advance. A third danger is that an individual will begin to form an opinion and dream up an interpretation of the entire play which is strictly the director's business.

At the Shreveport theater the director is in complete charge of all casting. Each prospective reader has a file card that he has filled out. This makes a permanent working record of both players and the backstage crew.

The readers are asked to keep their cards until they begin to read. The director then takes them so that he can write specific notes on them. Mr. Young will many times ask players to read more than once, often in two or three parts. He always asks those interested in understudy work and crew activities to be certain that the director has them in mind.

A detailed casting procedure is followed which results in accurate casting. At Shreveport three weeks elapse between their open tryouts and the first night rehearsal. This allows the players to adjust their personal schedules so that nothing will interfere with rehearsals.

From the time he is handed his individual script at tryouts until the production closes, the player concentrates upon his own assignment, his character, and lets the director blend his work into the whole. When slides are not available for rental through the playbrokers, the Shreveport theater make their own.

In directing, Mr. Young has found it possible to concentrate a large amount of teaching into ten-minute briefings be-

fore rehearsal, and ten to fifteen minute critiques after the rehearsal. He takes up a regular sequence of subjects, including all the fundamentals of acting, and presents them in lectures. He also sets a series of rehearsal objectives, paying particular attention during rehearsal to the topic discussed before it. In this way such matters as concentration, listening, repose, picking up cues, timing, the center of attention, continuity, characterization, receive explanation and graphic illustration. To underline the continuous quality of their work, Mr. Young often announces the subject of the next rehearsal's objective at the conclusion of the rehearsal's critique.

He makes certain that the dates for line-learning and for the end-of-prompting are clearly understood and well kept. One week before the play opens, all prompting is stopped and they are then able to set as their objectives the final creative ones which lead the play to readiness for its audience. During this last week, the assistant stage manager makes note of any line trouble so that the players do not have to remember errors but can concentrate on keeping alive the emotional values of the scenes. After rehearsal they check with the assistant stage manager for mistakes.

During this period Mr. Young stresses the basic reason for theater, the mutual emotional experience of players and audience, and the obligation of the actors to keep that emotional line alive and continuous. They are taught to believe firmly that nothing so deadly as a prompter's voice can be allowed near this creative work. In more than a quarter century a prompter's voice has never been heard during a performance. The actors are concerned when they find programs from other playhouses on the Green Room table carrying such titles as "book-holder" or "prompter."

Absolute democracy between the players and stage crew is maintained backstage at Shreveport due to the system of coordination and technical directing of Mrs. Young, the theater designer. Following the rule of wide participation, she uses more than a hundred individuals each season in the technical departments. A device which aids this, and has long-range value, is her system of day and night crews. High school and college students work at the Playhouse after school and on Saturdays. The night crew, made up of adults, works through the entire rehearsal and production period. Their schedules are as prescribed as those of the players. The Youngs, as well as the members of the theater, have found that giving dignity and responsibility to crew work pays well.

Part of every actor's technical equipment is the ability to do his own make-up. To achieve this end, make-up supervisors begin at a definite point in rehearsal to teach the full process to new actors, and to work with experi-

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enced players on the special problems for their current character. When dress rehearsals arrive, the actors do their own make-up with the supervisors standing by for any needed corrections.

The Shreveport players rehearse in a technical atmosphere carefully planned to help them at every step. The moment the actors are ready for rehearsal properties, the crew which has been assembling them begins to work at each rehearsal. Handling of unusual costumes is made simple as the costume crew provides rehearsal costumes of matching size and weight early in the schedule.

The players are always given roughed-in settings in the second week. As these grow to completion with the play, actors are never handicapped in later rehearsals, when their full attention and energy should be given to creative problems, by having suddenly to learn how to use a stairway, a balcony, doors, and windows. They also have the luxury of rehearsing with the final furniture a week before opening which builds ease and confidence.

All light cues and effects and all scene shifts are rehearsed for ten days or two weeks before dress rehearsal under Mrs. Young's direction. In those precious last hours of preparation, the actors are left free for complete concentration and creative acting. Their six annual productions use from eighty to one hundred different individuals as actors.

Ushering gives high school and college girls an attractive part in theater activity; Shreveport uses four girls each night from an usher corps of from fifty to seventy-five per season.

When the Dublin Players visited Shreveport during the 1955-56 season and watched a performance of the Shreveport Little Theater, there were repeated statements by the professionals: "What lucky people. You can enjoy making theater and not worry about eating."

Lucky people? Yes, and a lucky community which has been fortunate enough to enjoy theater of professional caliber within their own "charmed circle."

## DIRECTOR

(Continued from Page 15)

gunfight of the western would start, for instance, with a shot from a distance that would allow the camera to include everything in the whole fight. After that, camera lenses are changed and the large bulky instrument moved to focus on the hero's action; the process is repeated for the villain, and finally special shots are made from distinctive angles. Not all of these will appear on the screen, and they will certainly not appear in the order made, but each one is made carefully anyway. In each of the dozen or more takes, the actors try to repeat what they did in the master shot, while their colleagues not "on camera" wait patiently on the sidelines.

Some takes may present the difficulty of extremely precise preparation. Special rehearsals may be needed for the "dolly shot," when the camera is moved on a small car into or out of or around the action. The same may be the case for "trucking," when the camera moves along with the actors, or a "crane shot," when the camera is suspended overhead and is moved to different heights and over wide areas. Greatest care will probably be given the unusual angles of "tilt shots." Common techniques, such as the slow sweeping "pan" and the "close-up," require little extra attention by an experienced crew, although the actors may need extra coaching.

If the director and cameraman have done a good day's work, they will have photographed several set-ups well enough so that "re-takes" won't be necessary. *Their purpose is to photograph each bit of action from the ideal viewpoint—the viewpoint which allows the screen picture to tell the story by the way it reveals each detail expressively while drawing the audience subtly into identification with the actors.* Whereas in life we see events from only one viewpoint and are often unable to understand what we can see, the film can take us to the best possible distance and angle to view all the action with complete understanding and gain in dramatic impact.

How does the soaring trapeze artist feel when his partner seems liable to drop him? In the German film, *Variety*, Murnau showed this emotion by taking his camera aloft to swing back and forth above the uplifted swarm of faces, and then had the camera plunge suddenly toward the earth! How can a modern audience be made to appreciate a Paris night club of fifty years ago? In *Moulin Rouge* John Huston conveyed the gaudy, flaming atmosphere by bringing his camera in low to photograph with a blurred effect the swirling can-can dancers.

But how did Joseph Manckiewicz get the shots of the Nazi officers flying over the desert on a motorcycle, finally spilling into a wreck, in *The Young Lions*? Of course the wreck was filmed on location with "stunt men" wearing the lead-



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ing actors' costumes. Quickly succeeding are shots of the leads in the sand, making it seem they were the ones who took the tumble. This is elementary.

The motorcycle ride was done by "processing." A "second unit" with an assistant director in charge went onto location, set up a fast trucking shot of the desert background, and whizzed along to get the background accurately. This film was brought back to the studio and edited. On the sound stage it was projected from the rear onto a large screen. In front of the screen Manckiewicz arranged for his actors to sit on a motorcycle placed on a bumping treadmill with a powerful fan blowing in their faces. Then he set his camera to pick up the actors from the waist up against the moving picture on the screen behind

them.... This "rear" or "back projection" method is the most common form of processing. The observant spectator will notice that backgrounds in rear projections are a little faded, or look a little "painted." Such films as *Around the World in Eighty Days* could have been made in no other way.

Fantasy effects are accomplished by "matte shots" which block out part of the frame on one exposure which includes the action, and block out the remainder for the second exposure of scenery. Intricately crafted models of small size are also made to appear huge and lifelike: one studio has a model of Manhattan it has used many times.

Work done after filming itself has been completed usually takes longer than shooting did. The editing procedure is

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## BAKER'S



## PLAYS

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The director first sees what he has accomplished when he views the "rushes" after the day's shooting. These are prints of film previously taken, which are made up as quickly as possible. If they are satisfactory, shooting can proceed and the director makes some notes for the film's editor.

The editor's main work occurs in a small room where he has assembled all the thousands of feet of film shot. He looks at them through an instrument called a "movieola" and, using the script and notes or conferences with the director as a guide, makes a "rough cut" by splicing into a logical order what appear to be the best shots made at different places and times.

"Screen geography" must be watched carefully in editing. An actor who comes onto the screen from the left side must in the next shot continue to move from left to right. For this reason the director has had to remember in shooting not to cross an imaginary line with his camera. If the camera moves beyond the imaginary line, usually established by the master shot's viewpoint, directions on the screen will be completely reversed!

Another rule followed in editing is not to splice in a close-up until a more distant view of the action has "established" the set-up. Once the first close-up has been used, the key actor's figure must be kept in the same part of the screen

when the editor cuts from close to longer views. The "reverse angle" editing technique is a good example of this: first we see a man running across a street to a door; the "reverse angle" is our second view, which is taken by the camera looking over his shoulder at the street he crossed, to give the effect of his looking back — but the head and shoulders must be "framed" in the same part of the screen where we saw the man when he reached the door in the previous shot. Otherwise the audience's eyes would have to flick back and forth across the screen in confusion.

The sound track obviously cannot be completed until the final editing has been done on the pictures shot. A director does not pay as much heed to this important operation, since skillful sound men know how to follow the implicit directions in the pictures.

Sound editing may present difficulties if it wasn't possible during shooting to get good recordings of dialogue, and for this reason the sound of a film and the pictures are not put together until everything else has been done. In this way actors can "dub" dialogue that was unclear, synchronizing their speech with the lip movements they made during shooting. (In a scene filmed on a beach, for example, the ocean noise would periodically interfere with the actors' voices.) This method is also used consistently in musicals. As a result, the actor who can-

not sing may have a fine voice dubbed in for him, and a singing actor can concentrate during shooting on his acting later to concentrate on singing well during dubbing. Almost all sound effects and music are synchronized after shooting by the sound engineers till finally the "marriage" of film and sound can be made.

Within the film business it is recognized that the most important thing done is the actual shooting, and the second most important thing is the editing and processing. As the director is in command of both operations usually, this makes his position paramount.

This may not always be true. It is the producer who starts the movie on its way. He is responsible for the movie's *production values*: the things which will make the show attractive to audiences — story, stars and other talents, budget, scenery, publicity. Some producers retain such a firm control over their pictures that they dominate them completely. To avoid this, many directors recently have taken to producing their own pictures.

But producers' temptation to tamper with a director's work is dangerous, may irreparably hurt a film, as happened in the famous case of *The Red Badge of Courage*, a masterpiece which was ruined by such tampering. This is only the final proof of the director's unusual importance as the man who makes the movie.

## PLAYMAKERS

(Continued from Page 14)

in the car driving home that at the next meeting of the club, each one of them chose a half dozen members to collaborate on a children's theater play.

One group wrote about Heidi Bo-Peep, a little shepherd girl in Switzerland. While Heidi was chatting with the Duke's son, who lived in the castle on the hill, her sheep strayed away. (We managed that by tying ropes on the front feet of four life-sized painted wooden sheep and pulling them off stage.) When Hans went along home with Heidi to explain to her parents, his father - the stern Duke - arrived and told them he had seen some sheep. As a teacher, I loved the end of this play. Hans asked his father's permission to have Heidi come to the castle so that she could study with his teacher, because otherwise she would not be able to get an education. Heidi was overjoyed when the Duke consented.

Another play was developed from the Simple Simon rhyme. Simon was very hungry, but the pieman wouldn't let him have a pie unless he could pay for it. Simon overheard two women saying that the young man who could make the princess laugh should marry her. Simon impersonated all kinds of animals for the princess, but she was bored. Desperately he decided that if he couldn't marry the princess, he'd at least get a pie; so he requested that a pie be brought to him as though he planned to use it in the act. As he hurriedly turned aside to eat it, he tripped over the princess' foot and his face went right into the gooey pie. The princess laughed; so Simon got the princess instead of the pie.

We decided we'd take four of our original plays to one of the elementary schools in our joint district. They turned two classrooms into one by opening folding doors. Then the kiddies literally picked up their chairs and brought them into the room. They arranged themselves on all sides of a central playing area. Shakespeare would have felt at home with our stage sets (or lack of properties), but the audience responded as though we were from Hollywood. When Simple Simon distributed his pie not only over his face but also on the floor, one member of the audience couldn't resist sampling it. This would have been fine if the pie had been made of something other than shaving cream. That one matinee gave thirty-seven students an opportunity to participate in creative dramatics, either as writers or actors.

This brings us to a basic question about present-day living: Are we turning into a generation of spectators, listeners, followers, or can we still in this Age of TV be creative, active participants? At home we turn on television as a sedative to make us forget the frustrations of the day. We turn our backs on our own problems. We let others create our entertainment and make up our minds about what we

should buy. Then we envy the ones who make names for themselves and wonder how they do it.

How can we face our problems and solve them? One ideal way is through writing about them and discussing them. Instead of griping and complaining about things we don't like, we can isolate the area of conflict in our lives and in play form create solutions. O'Neill was considered our foremost playwright because he could define problems that were common to many people of his generation. At the high school level we can encourage our students to analyze their personal or family problems and visualize what will ensue if one or another choice is made.

One of the trends today in the arts is to encourage creativity. So many people are followers in hairstyles, in dress, in home decoration, that art groups, especially in the New England states, are encouraging rug making, jewelry making, and other forms of creative art. Building your own home was a creative thing in the past. Today one hires a decorator to tell one how to integrate the furnishings so that the interiors of modern homes now follow a pattern.

Students who have participated in the playmaking activities of the Carolina Playmakers, University of North Carolina, at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, know the values of writing and produc-

ing plays. Last summer fifty high school students enjoyed working there together as the Junior Carolina Playmakers from July 19 to August 22.

Warren Smith of Penn State University, a former Chapel Hill student, recently made this statement: "It seems to me that this business (of PLAYMAKING) is most fun when it genuinely reflects the world of the writer . . . not necessarily the realistic world, maybe the dream-world or the hope-world or the fear-world, but at least not somebody else's world."

In the United States I imagine there must be dozens of superior students who could write a three-act play for school production. When I come into contact with one of these talented students, I shall do all I can to encourage him to write a long play. Until that time we'll continue to pay royalties for the three-act plays, but we'll get our real creative experience out of MAKING our one-act PLAYS.

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# BRIEF VIEWS

By WILLARD FRIEDERICH



**T**HIS month's column is devoted to children's theater scripts—that is, plays to be presented for children by either adult or child actors. When child actors are essential, the reviews will specifically say so. Likewise, unless otherwise designated, all scripts are estimated to have a normal, full playing time for children's audiences: between one and two hours.

**THE RED SHOES** by Robin Short. French; 3M, 3W, optional extras, especially dancers. Two acts; Scene: the village square and a gypsy camp. Royalty: \$15.

This is a charming story, based on the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale of a young girl who, as long as she is wearing the magic red shoes, is forced to dance without resting. She is tricked into putting them on by a traveling gypsy and then cannot get them off without his magic buttonhook that breaks the spell. He spirits her away from her newly found grandmother and her sweetheart, the cobbler's apprentice, and plans to make a fortune with her as his star performer in their travels around Europe. But his tender-hearted little clown steals the buttonhook and frees the girl so that she can be reunited with her family and friends. The pantomimic role of the clown, a mute, is a challenging and unusual one, and it would help greatly if he—as well as the girl of course—could really dance well. Other optional dances of the folk or interpretive type could be inserted. Costumes are Danish, middle nineteenth century.

**PUSS IN BOOTS** by Rowena Bennett. French; 9M, 3W, optional extras. Three acts; Scene: before a mill, a forest, and a castle courtyard. Royalty: \$15.

Tested at the Goodman Theater in Chicago, this thoroughly delightful play dramatizes the old fairy tale of the poor miller's son whose cat cleverly makes him a fortune, creates him the Marquis of Carabas, and wins for him a royal wife and the confiscated castle of the forest ogre (who is seduced by Puss into turning himself into a mouse and is then eaten by the wily cat). Characterization is excellent, even the minor characters who have been added to the story, such as the Princess' aunt; and the dialogue, especially the verse lines spoken by Puss and the Ogre, is lively and humorous (the other characters speak in prose). Settings need not necessarily be elaborate. Costumes are medieval.

**THE PRINCESS AND THE SWINEHERD** by Gwendolen Seiler. French, Rev. 1954; 18M, 5W, optional extras. Three acts; Scene: a throne room, the royal piggeries, a nursery. Royalty: \$15.

A rather loose dramatization of this old tale becomes a delightfully funny story with a flock of extraneous characters that are amusingly original. The irascible King and his housewife Queen offer their daughter's hand to any Prince who can pass a test of daring. When all aspirants fail rather ingloriously, a young peasant offers his felicitations and asks permission to serve the princess. He does, by finding the King's lost pigs, and is made the royal swineherd. Of course he turns out to be a prince in disguise and eventually wins a most willing princess after a lot of high-jinks involving a somewhat cockney butler, an addle-pated town-crier, a couple of court auditors, and a cooking pot that sings. Three catch little songs (with accompaniment) are provided by the author's

husband, Conrad Seiler. Costumes of a semi-stylized George Washington period are suggested—with the implication that such bits of business as telephone conversations are merely humorous anachronisms that add to the fun of the thing. Settings could be elaborate, but literally require nothing more than a throne, a fence, and a practical door and window.

**WINNIE-THE-POOH** by Kristin Sergel. Dramatic Pub. Co.; 1 young boy and 11 animals, extra animals optional. Three acts; Scene: three slightly different locales in the forest. Royalty: \$25.

All the favorite, famous old characters are much in evidence in this dramatization of the A. A. Milne classic: Christopher Robin, Pooh, Kanga and Roo, Piglet, Wol, Eeyore, and Rabbit. So are many of the familiar situations: the arrival of Kanga in the forest, her merciless bathing and doctoring of Piglet, Pooh's getting stuck in the rabbit hole and his sky journey at the end of the balloon, Roo's running away from home. Christopher Robin is used only to introduce each of the three acts. This kind of production could be a lot of fun if one actually tried to suggest the physical and vocal attributes of the various animals, but it could also be done without such realistic characteristics of course, since Christopher Robin thinks of the animals as people. Costumes too could be an attempt at reality or merely symbolic. The forest setting does call for one tree—probably any style—but the rest of it is fairly optional, depending upon inclination and budget. It is possible that the success of this play might depend upon the children's familiarity with the wonderful stories, since emphasis is upon characterization rather than physical action; but, on the other hand, it is also possible that a production might stimulate interest in reading these delightful books, even in an age of TV westerns and science fiction.

**HEIDI** by Friedberg, *et al.* French; 6M, 6W, extras. Three acts; Scenes: a mountain cabin, a wealthy home, and several outdoor locales that could be done before a curtain or backdrop. Royalty: on application.

Really more an operetta than a play, this version of the classic juvenile novel by Johanna Spyri is the one done over TV in 1955 by Max Liebman. The story of the orphan who softens her embittered old grandfather and learns to love his Swiss mountain home so much that she leaves her position in the household of a wealthy and kind family in Frankfurt is always effective; and this musical interpretation, based on themes of Robert Schumann, has not lost any of the old appeal. Music for the soloists and chorus is available from the publisher, who will also furnish free piano or orchestra scores. To achieve the typical quick changes of locale used in the TV show, a flexible multiple set will be necessary, as well as spot lighting. Only about eight of the cast must do any solo singing. Costumes are nineteenth century German and Swiss folk dress.

**THE LAST OF THE LEPRECHAUNS** by Sisters M. M. Holloway and de L. S. McKeon. French; 5M, 4W, extras. Three acts; Scene: a throne room and a forest clearing. Royalty: \$15.

This original story combines the dependable old ingredients of fantasy and the triumph of true love over the machinations of the, in this case, villainess. Cathy, the poor peasant girl, is groomed by Witzzy, the king of the leprechauns, to be the wife of the handsome Prince Michael who will soon take over the throne from his aging father. The Lady Grabitual wants

to make her clumsy daughter Queen, however, and does everything she can to discredit the young girl who so mysteriously appears from the forest to participate in the contest to choose the Prince's wife. With Witzzy's magic shoes and other aids, Cathy proves herself of royal blood, worthy of the Prince and of Ireland. Six original tunes, the contribution of Sister McKeon, are provided; and full piano score for the songs is furnished any producer free of charge by the publisher. Costumes of the semi-medieval period are suggested, although most any period in the time of an Irish monarchy would be apropos. Characters are pretty realistic, even King Witzzy; additional non-speaking leprechauns are needed, plus court people if desired.

**LET'S GO TO THE MOON** by Conrad Seiler. French; 7M, 5W, optional extras. Three acts; Scene: a living room and an outdoor spot on the moon. Royalty: \$15.

In this original story Bill is an all-American boy of eleven, with the customary interests in space travel and the usual hindrance of two older, well-behaved sisters. The girls try to help Bill mend his ways by seeking to interest him in the more quiet and sedate pastime of reading the old fairy tales. When Bill falls asleep in disgust, he dreams that Captain Extraordinary arrives to take him to the moon in his rocket ship. On the moon Bill is dumbfounded to discover that the inhabitants are all the fugitives from the fairy tales, for they have grown dispirited at the lack of interest shown in them by modern boys and girls on earth. A big fight between Jack the Giant Killer and Jack of Beanstalk fame is fortunately interrupted by the arrival of the fearful Man in the Moon. At this point Bill wakes up to find his sisters have engineered a surprise costume party for his birthday, to which his friends wear the costumes he saw in his dream. Directions are given for securing some exciting scenic effects through rather simple means. Costumes are any of the traditional ones these characters wear in the various story books. The first act is probably over-long and might need a bit of judicious cutting; but, once the moon is reached, things are lively enough. Most actors should be in their early teens for the best effect.

**PINKY WINKY'S TRIP TO THE MOON** by Barbara Floyd. Baker; about 9M, 10W, 8C, optional extras (some doubling also possible). Seven short scenes; Sets: a bedroom and assorted locales in the sky and on the moon. Royalty: \$5.

Pinky wonders about the Man in the Moon and, when he finally goes to sleep, he dreams that he makes a trip there to visit him. Along the Milky Way he stops at assorted clouds before he gets to the throne room. He has encounters with all the old familiar personalities: the stars; the cow that jumped over the moon and her various friends, the cat, the dog, and the plate and spoon who watched the feast; the big and little Bears and Dippers; and his Very Own Star that appeared in the sky when he was born. Being a play for small children, all the roles could be done by children; if adults or older teen-agers are used for some roles, small children must be used for the rest. Several of the characters could be either male or female. Obviously, to do these characters with realistic costuming would be quite a chore; it would be more sensible to follow the author's suggestions for simple symbolic dress in which, for example, a headdress could easily delineate the character—all of whom are, incidentally, always carefully named in the dialogue so that spectators will not be confused. Music and dance are suggested in several spots and probably could be used effectively in others. Running time should be around half an hour, depending on how much time is taken up with song and dance. The scenes can be merely suggested with a few furniture pieces, so that changes do not take too long. With imaginative production this could be a charming little entertainment for very young elementary school children.

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